

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
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MARINE CORPS ORDER 1730.6D

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: Distribution List

Subj: COMMAND RELIGIOUS PROGRAMS IN THE MARINE CORPS

Ref: (a) SECNAVINST 1730.7A
(b) MARCORMAN, par. 2816
(c) SECNAVINST 1730.8
(d) White Letter 10-96
(e) FMFM 3-6
(f) FMFM 3-1
(g) SECNAVINST 1300.12
(h) MCO 1300.8R
(i) MCO P5320.5
(j) SECNAVINST 1730.3G
(k) MCO P10120.28
(l) MCO P1020.34F
(m) MCO P7110
(n) SECNAVINST 7010.6
(o) MCO 7010.17A
(p) MCO 1510.102
(q) MCO 1010.109
(r) MCO 1500.51A
(s) SECNAVINST 1650.1F
(t) SECNAVINST 5400.14A
(u) BUPERSINST 1616.10

1. Purpose. To establish policies, responsibilities, and procedures for providing religious ministry in the Marine Corps as set forth in reference (a).

2. Cancellation. MCO 1730.6C

3. Summary of Revisions. This order is a complete revision and should be reviewed in its entirety.

4. Background

a. References (a) and (b) establish Department of the Navy and Marine Corps policy for the free exercise of religion for active duty Marines, Sailors, family members, and other authorized persons.

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b. Commanders are responsible for establishing and maintaining a Command Religious Program (CRP) which supports the free exercise of religion as set forth in reference (a). Commands shall include the CRP as an integral and essential element of its administration, planning, programming and budgeting activities.

c. Reference (c) outlines the accommodation of religious beliefs and practices of individual members. Whenever possible, accommodating individual religious beliefs and practices is encouraged. However, the impact of accommodation must not adversely affect military readiness, individual or unit readiness, unit cohesion, health, safety, or good order and discipline.

d. Navy chaplains and Religious Program Specialists (RP) are assigned to Marine Corps commands to provide ministries and to facilitate the free exercise of religion as outlined in reference (a).

5. Information

a. To the full extent provided by references (a), (c) and (d), CRPs will provide opportunities for participants to express and nurture their religious faith. Participation in the CRP is voluntary. CRPs include, but are not limited to the following:

(1) Divine services, pastoral acts, religious education, retreats, and other group religious activities.

(2) Programs of instruction and other activities that provide, family team building enrichment, marriage preparation, moral and ethical development, and suicide awareness from a religious perspective.

(3) Visitation and ministration to command personnel in hospitals and brigs.

(4) Lay leaders, religious education teachers, and other volunteers that serve in the CRP.

(5) Volunteer charitable service projects to assist and support charitable organizations and needy individuals in the United States and foreign countries.

b. The commander's responsibility for the CRP is executed through the following individuals:

(1) Chaplains. Chaplains are principal staff officers who serve under the cognizance of the chief of staff or the executive officer of a command as stated in references (a), (b), (e), and (f). They implement the CRP and advise the commander on spiritual, moral, and ethical issues affecting the command. Reference (a) sets forth Department of the Navy policy for the Chaplain Corps. The following policy applies to chaplains assigned to the Marine Corps:

(a) The Chaplain, U. S. Marine Corps advises the Commandant and Headquarters staff agencies on matters concerning religious ministries throughout the Marine Corps. The organizational levels of assignment contained in reference (a) for a claimant staff chaplain are applicable to The Chaplain, U. S. Marine Corps.

(b) The senior or supervisory chaplain of a command will be designated the Command Chaplain and serve as the Special Staff Officer or Assistant Chief of Staff for religious ministry per reference (b). Supervisory chaplains are senior chaplains assigned to units that have subordinate elements with chaplains attached to those elements or assigned to shore based commands with chapels on station. The functions and responsibilities set forth in reference (a) for supervisory chaplains are applicable to Marine Corps Command Chaplains or Assistant Chiefs of Staff for Religious Ministries.

(c) Chaplains are assigned to a unit for the primary purpose of facilitating religious ministries within that unit. Chaplains have specific responsibilities to their commander as detailed in references (a) and (e). They also have professional and ministerial responsibilities to their appropriate supervisory chaplains. In no instance will chaplains accept part-time or full-time civilian ministerial positions without prior approval of the Chaplain of the Marine Corps via endorsement by the Commanding Officer.

(2) Enlisted Personnel.

(a) Navy Religious Program Specialist (RP). Reference (a) provides for the assignment of RPs to Marine Corps commands to protect chaplains in combat operations and to support them in planning, programming, administration and coordination of the CRP. Female RPs assigned to the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) are restricted to service in units specified by references (g) and (h).

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(b) Chaplain Assistant (CA). Per reference (i), Marines will continue to be assigned to the CRP staff as CAs when required RP manning is not available and the unit Table of Organization (T/O) supports the requirement. When feasible, Marine CAs having an MOS 0151, primary or secondary, will be provided by the unit of which the chaplain is a member.

(c) Per chapter 2 of reference (i), a command authorized and assigned a chaplain is required no less than one RP or Marine CA. Personnel authorized a Marine CA per their T/O should request assignments from their Personnel Officer.

(3) Additional Religious Program Personnel Resources. Additional clergy assistance may be provided per reference (j). CRP staff may also include civil service secretaries, accounting technicians, and other office personnel authorized on the command T/O. In addition, non-personal services may be contracted as outlined in reference (a).

(4) Lay Leaders. Commanders may appoint a lay leader to serve for a period of time to meet the religious needs of a particular religious faith group as provided for in reference (b). The commander should seek the advice of the command chaplain or chaplain attached to a higher echelon regarding the selection of an appropriate lay leader. RPs will not be assigned as lay leaders, but will facilitate the provision of ministry where lay leaders are assigned (a).

(a) Lay leaders are volunteers selected on the basis of high moral character, motivation and religious interest. The appointment conferred by the commander does not imply any civilian credentials or approval.

(b) Lay leaders serve for a limited appointment not to exceed one year. They serve under the supervision of the command chaplain or chaplain in the next higher headquarters. The appointment is terminated when the need no longer exists; for example, at the end of a deployment or when the lay leader is transferred.

(c) Lay-Conducted services supplement the CRP and are an option driven by necessity only. They are not to be considered a substitute for divine services conducted by chaplains or ordained civilian clergy.

(5) Non-Federal entities and CRP. Chaplains have a responsibility to administer the command religious programs, administer sacraments, perform religious rites and ceremonies, and provide divine services, outreach programs, spiritual growth retreats, and religious education. There are, however, certain private religious organizations which some parishioners find helpful, enriching and supportive. Within certain limits, such organizations may be allowed base access under the cognizance of the CRP. Limits and guidelines in such cases are as follows:

(a) The installation or base commanding officer is the only person authorized to grant or deny private religious organizations permission to operate on base. Each commanding officer must take the determination on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the following guidelines:

(1) Any private religious organization seeking to operate on base must seek prior approval from the base or installation commanding officer.

(2) The Marine Corps may not explicitly or implicitly provide official endorsement or preferential treatment to any non-federal entity.

(3) If an admission fee is charged, it must not exceed the cost of supporting the event.

(4) DoD employees who are officers, directors, employees, or active participants in a private organization are prohibited from participating in the decision to authorize official support to the same organization.

(5) Organizations which are prejudicial to health, readiness, or good order and discipline (for example; groups which explicitly or implicitly denigrate the race, ethnic origins, or religious practices of others or groups which advocate destructive actions) should not be admitted to bases. Commanding officers have wide discretion as to whom they may exclude from their posts, and such discretion will be disturbed only upon a showing that grounds for exclusion were patently arbitrary or discriminatory.

(b) Chaplains shall not delegate their official responsibilities to private, volunteer, religious organizations by allowing such organizations to run a portion of the CRP as opposed to providing supplemental social opportunities. The prohibition against allowing a private organization to run a portion of the CRP does not include contract clergy.

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(6) Uniforms. Navy chaplains and RPs assigned to the Marine Corps may elect to wear the appropriate Marine Corps service or utility uniform as outlined in references (k) and (l).

6. Action. Commanders will have chaplains assigned to their commands for the express purpose of administering their CRP. Chaplains will accomplish this by following, at a minimum, these program essential requirements:

a. Command Religious Program Standing Operating Procedures (CRP SOP). SOPs will be used by commands to delineate specific policies and responsibilities regarding the operation of the CRP. SOPs will define the particular duties and functions of all members assigned to the CRP. These SOPs should include, at a minimum, program requirements and taskings, watch standing procedures, response to disasters, support of the Casualty Assistance Program and coordination of ministry with other commands in the area.

b. Facilities. The CRP uses chapels, education facilities, and designated office areas to offer military personnel, their families and other eligible persons the most comprehensive CRP possible in support of the free exercise of religion. References (a), (b) and (m) provide that all facilities and programs be supported by appropriated (O&M, MC) funding. The following guidelines apply to religious facilities:

(1) Command chaplains will assist commanders by regularly inspecting facilities for cleanliness and neatness and by ensuring proper maintenance of buildings and equipment which are used in the CRP.

(2) Commands having chapels will publish a chapel usage order which defines the availability and precedence of use of these facilities.

(3) Because of the confidential nature of a chaplain's pastoral role with individuals, chaplains require separate working spaces. The chaplain's office space will not be shared with other office staff and will be readily accessible to all members of the command and their family members.

(4) Attendance and scheduling logs will be maintained to assess the appropriate use of facilities and assist in measuring community participation in the CRP.

(5) Upgrading inadequate CRP facilities and construction of new facilities to meet identified CRP deficiencies are the responsibility of the commander. Command chaplains are to advise the commander on facility requirements and project programs requiring facility improvements and expansion.

(6) A special Chapel Life Extension Program (CLEP) has been established to supplement funds required for minor construction work. Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (LPP) may execute CLEP funding from project input provided by Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (REL).

c. Appropriated Funding. Commands will use local O&M funds to support the CRP according to references (a), (b) and (m).

(1) The CRP will be reflected as an entity in program objective memorandum submissions, budget requests, midyear reviews, and follow-on spending plans. O&M funding planning, programming, and budgeting will reflect current and anticipated program requirements that support the unique needs of all faith groups served by the CRP. Commands will prepare and submit annual O&M budget estimates per reference (m).

(2) Commanders will follow the guidance of references (l) and (m) for the procurement of consumable and non-consumable CRP supplies, as well as CRP equipment.

(3) O&M funds provide the following services in support of the CRP: printing, equipment repair, equipment rental, transportation and cleaning.

(4) Non-personal service contracts authorized for O&M funding include, but are not limited to, the following: contract clergy support, religious education coordinators, choir directors, organists, pianists, chapel child care providers during chapel functions; and resource persons to direct special programs such as single servicemember outreach, study courses, religious drama, and retreats.

(5) Commanders are authorized to utilize O&M funding to support retreats, denominational conference attendance and official training for chaplains and Religious Program Specialists assigned to the CRP. When a CRP is coordinating a religious/spiritual retreat, O&M monies may be used to fund Chaplains, Religious Program Specialists and other designated personnel that are members of the staff providing the service. In the case of an off-base retreat, for example, funds may cover POV mileage, lodging expenses and meals for the staff only. These funds may also pay for the rental or costs of retreat site facilities other than identifiable lodging of the attendees.

O&M funds are not authorized to pay for expenses incurred by attendees, such as meals and personal transportation.

(6) Investment-type items will be funded with procurement funds.

(7) Per reference (a), no fees or gratuities will be charged or received for the use of Government facilities in the performance of any religious act, sacrament, or rite. No fees or gratuities will be charged or received by a chaplain in the performance or support of any religious act, sacrament, or rite on Government-owned property or for persons entitled to receive such services by authorization of the Department of the Navy. No RP or CA will be paid any fees for services performed on Government property in support of any religious act, sacrament, rite, or for persons entitled to receive such services by authorization of the Department of the Navy.

d. Non-Appropriated Funding. The Religious Offering Fund (ROF) is a non-appropriated fund established by and administered under the authority of the commander. References (a) and (b) authorize the ROF. References (n) and (o) provide policy and procedural guidance for opening, utilizing, managing, and auditing the ROF.

e. Training

(1) Chaplains, RPs, and Marine CAs. Marine Commanders shall establish and support a training program for chaplains, RPs and CAs assigned to their commands. The performance standards set forth in references (p), (q) and (r) apply. Chaplains, RPs and CAs will participate in annual unit Battle Skills Training. Chaplains and RPs assigned to operational forces of the Fleet Marine Force may be eligible to receive the Navy Fleet Marine Force Ribbon. Eligibility requirements are set forth in section 430.5 of reference (s). Chaplains are exempt from Close Order Drill, Marksmanship and Individual Tactical Measures subjects. All Marine Corps commanders will develop and support professional training for chaplains, RPs and CAs.

(2) Chaplain/RP Expeditionary Skills Training (CREST). CREST completion is required for all chaplains and RPs enroute to an initial assignment with the Fleet Marine Force. CREST will take place at Field Medical Service School East, and will provide chaplains and RPs with training in field skills, combat ministry and USMC orientation. RPs, upon successful completion, will be awarded the Navy Enlisted Classification (NEC) 2401. Chaplains completing the course will be given an additional qualifications for duty (AQD) code. Reservists will also attend CREST at their first Annual Training.

(3) Mentoring. Mentoring is an aspect of training that is an aspect of training that is both professional and relational. All command chaplains will ensure that a mentoring program which includes both subordinate chaplains and RPs/CAs is implemented and identifiable.

(4) Lay Leaders. Commanders utilizing lay leaders shall provide instruction for them through the appropriate command chaplain. Recruits who successfully complete the lay leader training at either of the two recruit depots will be assigned Service School Code M4E.

f. Accountability

(1) Commands are accountable for all non-consumable items. Unit commanders will ensure that a Responsible Officer (RO) from the CRP is assigned in writing and that the RO will maintain an inventory of all non-consumable items purchased by O&M funds.

(2) Sacramental and kosher wine will be secured in a locked container (e.g., locker, cabinet or refrigerator), and a usage log will be maintained.

g. Reports. Naval fitness and evaluation reports required by reference (q) are for officers and enlisted members. Command chaplains will not be delegated as reporting seniors, but will assist and advise commanders in the preparation and appropriate submission of these reports.

h. Area Coordination. Coordination of ministry resources is essential to provide for the free exercise of religion in the Marine Corps. Navy chaplains assigned to Marine Corps commands reflect a variety of faith groups and traditions. Chaplains will ensure that all service members, their families and other eligible personnel are afforded opportunities to exercise their religious beliefs through coordination of ministry per reference (t). The responsibilities of Coordinating Chaplains will include:

(1) Coordinating professional activities, ceremonies, professional training and duty chaplain watchbills among area chaplains.

(2) Coordinating professional activities, ceremonies and professional training among area RPs.

(3) As needed conducting area RP applicant screening board.

(4) Supporting area civic and religious ceremonies and activities.

(5) Coordinating FMF chaplain and RP the involvement of chaplains and RPs in area religious programs.

(6) Insure that Chaplains and RP Operational commitments take precedence over area programs requirements.

i. Commands without Chaplains/RPs Assigned. Commanders with no chaplains or RPs assigned to their command are encouraged to seek guidance from higher headquarters in meeting the religious needs of their people. The priority for obtaining resources to provide religious services is as follows:

(1) Navy chaplains/RPs from other Marine Corps or Navy activities.

(2) Selected Reserve Chaplains/RPs or Voluntary Training Unit Chaplains/RPs.

(3) Chaplains of other area military services.

(4) Contract civilian clergy.

(5) Lay leaders.

j. Force Chaplains. The command chaplains assigned as Marine Forces Atlantic and Marine Forces Pacific will monitor the coordination of chaplain/RP assignments from subordinate commands to Marine Air-Ground Task Forces. The Marine Forces Reserve Chaplain will monitor Reserve Chaplains and RP assignments, training, and readiness to mobilize. In addition, these Force Chaplains will monitor unit rotations and the resultant movement of chaplains and RPs between subordinate commands. Coordination functions of the Marine Forces Chaplains include:

(1) Ensuring that the assignment of chaplains to Marine Expeditionary Forces provides appropriate religious faith group representation.

(2) Monitoring command billet structures and recommending force structure changes to ensure the provision of ministry throughout their area of responsibility.

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(3) Ensuring that After Action Reports and Marine Corps Lessons Learned System information is passed from returning to deploying UMTs.

(4) Consolidating and interpreting reports pertaining to chaplains and RPs within their cognizance.

(5) Scheduling and executing staff visits and inspections concerning the implementation of programs of religious ministries, combat readiness, and coordination between FMF and supporting establishments.

(6) Maintaining liaison with The Chaplain, U.S. Marine Corps regarding the assignment, training, and coordination requirements of chaplains and RPs under their responsibility.

7. Reserve Applicability. This Order is applicable to the Marine Corps Reserve.

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